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SUBJECT: TIP IN TURKEY: TURKISH AMBASSADOR TO MOLDOVA
DELIVERS ANTI-TIP SPEECH

1. SUMMARY. Turkish Ambassador to Moldova Fatma Topcuoglu delivered the following speech at a 2-day conference on human trafficking in Chisinau, Moldova. END SUMMARY.

2. BEGIN TRANSCRIPT OF PREPARED REMARKS:

SPEECH DELIVERED BY H.E. FATMA FIRAT TOPCUOGLU
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY IN CHISINAU

Trafficking in Human Beings

- I would like to give brief and concise information on the situation in Turkey from different aspects as regards the trafficking in human beings.

- Turkey, at the crossroads of Asia, Middle East and Europe, bordering eight countries and lapped by 5,000 miles of coastline, has seriously been confronted with various forms of transnational organized crime, which pose a threat to its social order and human and democratic values.

- The situation in Turkey vis a vis human smuggling and trafficking in human beings is most often confused with each other. Although Turkey is a transit country for "migrant smugglers", no particular link has been discovered as to the existence of organized transit trafficking activity or trafficking networks operating on the Turkish territory.

- On the other hand, in recent years Turkey has become a destination country for nationals of transitional democracies, who are in search of better living conditions and job opportunities abroad.

- Nationals of the countries of origin may enter Turkey by a visa obtained at border gates and may stay in Turkey for up to two months. Their purpose is twofold. Mostly, they travel to Turkey for "suitcase trading". Secondly, they come to Turkey in search of job opportunities, which were available for them only in illegal labour markets until recently.

- While their presence in Turkey is generally voluntary, their illegal work and resident status, nevertheless, make them vulnerable to exploitation. Some of them obtain legal residency through arranged marriages. Some others end up in small workshops, in tourism and entertainment sector or in private households, working illegally without any job security, insurance or administrative and judicial safeguards. According to statistics, majority of male workers are employed in the construction sector and females in domestic services.

- As for the international obligations, Turkey became a party to UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and to its two additional Protocols including the "Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking, especially women and children", along with other conventions on this issue.

- In this connection, Turkey amended all its domestic laws accordingly starting with; the Penal Code (defines in terms of Palermo Protocols "trafficking in human beings" and prescribes heavy penalties for traffickers, including 5 to 10 years of imprisonment), the law on Combating Benefit-Oriented Criminal Organizations (criminalizes establishing, promoting, leading or participating in benefit-oriented criminal organizations with a view to carrying out organized crime activities), Citizenship Law (stipulates before acquiring Turkish citizenship through marriage a probation period of 3 years. Law on Working Permits for Foreigners (Employment of foreigners in domestic services is made possible. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is authorized to issue all forms of work permits for foreigners to ensure better management and control over the process. The law aims at providing legal protection for foreigners against exploitation in labour markets and extending legal and administrative safeguards to private services.) Highway Transportation Law (which states that the transportation permit will be canceled for 3 years if the charged person is sentenced according to certain crimes including human trafficking and migrant smuggling.)

- In Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for

national coordination of issues related to trafficking in human beings. The Ministry chairs the National Task Force on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, which is composed of experts from concerned ministries and NGOs such as the Human Rights Presidency of the Prime Minister's Office, the Foundation for the Development of Human Resources (IKGV), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Directorate General of the Status and Problems of Woman.

- The National Task Force was convened for the time in October 2002 and had five more meetings, last being on 18 February 2004. The National Action Plan, prepared by the Task Force is already under implementation.

- In the context of international cooperation, Turkish experts are participating to the ongoing meetings of the ad-hoc committee (CAHTEH), which is entrusted to prepare a Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings in the Council of Europe.

Further co-operation possibilities are considered particularly with the IOM on a project basis in areas of awareness raising, national referral mechanisms, victim protection, and voluntary return and reintegration assistance.

In this framework, Turkey is co-funding the project on Establishment of the Network of and Joint Training for Operational Law Enforcement Officers, NGOs and International Organizations in Fighting Human Trafficking into the EU Member States from EU Accession Countries and Countries Bordering the EU after Enlargement which is implemented by IOM, in cooperation with the European Commission (EC), European Parliament (EP), selected EU Member States, as well as the Candidate Countries and Third Countries bordering the enlarged European Union under the European Commission Directorate General Justice and Home Affairs, AGIS Programme 2003.

Turkey has proposed bilateral co-operation and a draft protocol on cooperation in combating trafficking in human beings to the main countries of origin, whose nationals target Turkey in search of better standards of living and may become vulnerable to exploitation. So far, the positive responses of Belarus, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Georgia have been received. In this respect, on 28 July 2004, Turkish and Belarus Interior Ministers signed a Memorandum of Understanding to enhance cooperation and show their determination in combating trafficking in human beings. In source countries, Turkish missions have expanded their activities in order to cooperate within the framework of the said protocols.

A Twinning Project on "strengthening Institutions in the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings" has been developed under the European Union 2003 Pre-accession Financial Assistance Programme.

On the other hand, visa application measures are set in order to prevent fake certificates of good services issued by some companies in the countries of origin to be used in the entertainment sector, such as in casinos or hotels. In this respect, an informative questionnaire is prepared for visa applicants.

- As a major step in the field of victim protection, the Ministry of Interior signed a protocol on 4 September 2003 with the Foundation for the Development of Human Resources (IKGV), as well-established non-governmental organization that actively involved in projects aimed at improving social and health conditions and assists to victims of trafficking in human beings.

- The Turkish Government, with its limited resources, provides, if necessary, accommodation and emergency services including psychiatric services, out of national budget and funds. The Ministry of Health has made the necessary arrangements in order to provide medical treatment free of charge to victims of trafficking in human beings.

- The Ministry of Interior is developing an improved screening method in order to identify victims of trafficking and to address their specific needs. Moreover, victims are granted extended courtesy residence permits.

- To address the specific needs of the children, a new Department for Children Affairs has been established within the Ministry of Interior. Accordingly Children Protection Units have been designated in 81 cities.

- As regards awareness raising/media coverage, Turkish media is sensitive to criminal and humanitarian aspects of trafficking in human beings. Trafficking cases and international developments are reported widely in the media.

- Awareness raising activities are focused on official targets such as law enforcement authorities. In addition to training programs, various events were organized to raise awareness and interest on the issue.

- Anti-trafficking training has become an integral part of the general professional training in the Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crimes. Participants include police officers as well as other national and regional law enforcement officials.

- Trafficking in human beings has also been included in the curricula of the Police Academy for final year students starting from this academic year. Around one thousand students will benefit from this lesson. Additionally, the Turkish Gendarmerie has included as from October 2003 the subject of trafficking in human beings in its education curriculum.

- Finally, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Justice are organizing special seminars/training programs to address different aspects of trafficking. Turkish experts take part also in comprehensive training programs organized by the Stability Pact Task Force, ICMPD and IOM.

- Most recent developments in this regard is the establishment of a shelter in Istanbul in July 2004 provided for the victims of trafficking.

Thank you for listening.

EDELMAN